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# THE HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK

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Home Demonstration Work, as now conducted in the fifteen southern states under coöperative agreement between the several state colleges of agriculture and the States Relations Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, includes the organization of about 60,000 girls who are enrolled to make demonstrations in canning club and poultry club work and 30,000 women who, in rural homes throughout the South, have undertaken definite work for the improvement and upbuilding of country life. All these demonstrations are directed by an organization of state and county agents who plan the demonstrations to be carried out, furnish information and instruction and work together with such unity of purpose and plan as to bring about each year definite results in the training of girls and women. These agents are aided by extension specialists who are constantly contributing information and skill in home economics and such divisions of agriculture as horticulture, dairying and poultry work. The activities directed by these women represent a type of education but recently recognized, yet of such usefulness that it has become a part of the life of at least 75,000 southern homes, has been given a permanent place in public school systems and receives recognition and aid from colleges and universities of every state.

## HOW THE WORK IS FINANCED

In the beginning, generous financial help from the General Education Board—the corporate trustees of a fund of more than \$50,000,000 given by John D. Rockefeller for educational purposes—made possible the free development of this work. This was soon followed by state and county appropriations. In 1914, Congress made appropriations to take the place of those being made by the General Education Board and the Smith-Lever Extension Act of 1914 brought its first federal appropriations in 1915, thus giving permanent support to demonstration work in agriculture and home

economics. The present year finds an organization of about 400 counties, supervised by 449 state, district and county agents.<sup>1</sup>

### THE MULTIPLICATION OF ACTIVITIES

Following the development of Farm Demonstration Work as a means of practical agricultural instruction and the development of boys' corn clubs, because many boys insisted upon being enrolled as demonstrators, there was a very insistent demand for activities for girls which should give them opportunity to carry on skillful work in their homes and enter into friendly contest with one another. The opportunity to influence and instruct adults through the interests of their children was recognized from the first.

Activities which have fundamental connection with every country home, and which involve the need for accurate information and skill in doing, were selected. During 1910 some girls' tomato clubs were organized in South Carolina and Virginia, with the aid of teachers and other school officials. These girls cultivated tenth-acre plots of tomatoes, following some simple instructions furnished by the Office of Farm Demonstration Work, and canning their vegetables under the instruction of one of its representatives. The results of this experiment were made the basis during the next year for the organization of from two to four counties each in the states of South Carolina, Virginia and Mississippi, under the leadership of women who were appointed to take charge of each state and with the aid of a few county workers whose services were secured for brief periods in the canning season. In 1912 the states with workers in charge were increased to eleven and a total of 160 counties were organized.

### THE STATE LEADER OR ORGANIZER

In the beginning of the girls' canning club work, a state leader or organizer was appointed. To help her in each county organized, a capable woman was secured for about two months in the year to hold the canning demonstrations in the summer and give what volunteer help she could in spring and fall. The clubs were organ-

<sup>1</sup> Anyone desiring fuller information about this work can secure it in the bulletins and publications of the States Relations Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and from the Extension Divisions of each of the State Colleges of Agriculture in the South.

ized and the first instruction was given through the schools where the girls could be met in groups. Correspondence and an occasional visit from the county agent had to suffice as instruction and supervision until the canning season opened when regular field meetings, in way of canning demonstrations for groups of members, were held at central points in the county. Again in autumn, the collecting of results and the holding of an exhibit of canned products were largely volunteer work of the county agent. The results which these workers obtained were so notable that in a short time this general plan was adopted permanently, the period of employment for the county agent increasing rapidly to nine or twelve months.

The girls' canning clubs, with a tenth-acre garden as the basis of each individual's work, have made possible a gradually evolved four years' program of work which thousands of girls have eagerly entered upon. Each year finds a larger per cent of these girls continuing the program and finishing the season's activities. As in all real demonstration work, the girl becomes a "demonstrator." She agrees to follow instructions and use approved methods; her work and its results being accomplished with more skill, greater efficiency, and showing finer quality than that which has heretofore been known, become an object lesson for others and the center of influence in the home and community. Each season brings its characteristic activity of natural work accompanied by the stimulus of individual ownership and group contests in skill and definite accomplishment.

#### A SYSTEMATIC FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM OF WORK

Since the mastery of some definite phase of work is essential for each year, a systematic program has been worked out. During the first year the girls select tomatoes as their main crop, learning a great deal about the cultivation of this vegetable and how to market both fresh and canned products. They acquire considerable horticultural skill in managing their gardens. The financial records they keep give a good business training. For the public demonstrations which they give for the benefit of their communities, these girls find it necessary to make attractive uniforms, aprons, caps, towels, holders, etc. This gives sewing a very definite place in their work. During the second year two vegetable crops are cultivated, these being chosen with definite regard to home needs and marketing con-

ditions. In addition to the canned vegetables, many clubs market soup mixtures, sauces and special products which have been originated for them, like Dixie relish and B. S. chutney. Sewing is continued in the making of uniform dresses of attractive and appropriate design and material. An instance of the use of such uniforms is given in the report of a county agent, as follows:

The meeting at Pheba was especially interesting. Sixteen Canning Club girls in white uniform, cap and apron, gave a program with club songs and yells. Afterwards they served a two-course luncheon to the mothers and teachers. The latter were especially interested and announced their intention of going back to their schools and having their club members make caps and aprons and learn the club songs.

During the next two years, perennial gardens are started and either small fruits or perennial vegetables, suited to the locality, or especially attractive for market, are planted. Many girls who have proceeded thus far are ready to make a reputation for special products from southern fruits such as the fig, scuppernong, May haw and guava, or to succeed admirably with the Spanish pepper for which a great demand exists. The preparation of their vegetable products for the table and contests in bread making are given active place. In many instances, winter gardening is carried on extensively.

#### THE HOME AND SCHOOL AT WORK TOGETHER

It can be easily seen that all of these activities are carried on in the home and form an integral part of the life of the girls themselves, but everywhere the schools are taking a very active part in promoting this work. The coöperation of the teacher is always essential. Since the girls work frequently in groups, many of their meetings are held at school where the girls should receive constant help in reading bulletins, following instructions and in keeping records. Sometimes a hot bed or cold frame is built on the school grounds and there, under the teachers' supervision, plants are raised for the home gardens. Club work furnishes constant opportunity to enliven school room routine with vital interests and fine motives for study. Many instances of the helpful reaction which these clubs have upon the schools have been reported. In a similar way they give the schools a better opportunity to bring influences to bear directly upon the homes. To enumerate a few of the results of demon-

stration work among girls, will perhaps show how this work has made possible the rapid growth of similar work among women. In the future it will be difficult to decide just when the individual gives up her girls' club work and, as an adult, enters upon a series of home demonstrations.

#### THE IMPROVEMENT OF ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

In addition to the educational aspect of this work, must be recognized the economic contribution which these girls' clubs are making. Of the 32,613 girls enrolled in the South in 1915, there were 14,810 whose reports show a total yield of 5,023,305 pounds of tomatoes, 1,262,953 pounds of other vegetables and fruits with a total of 903,562 containers packed and an average profit of \$24.01 per tenth acre. More than 9,000 girls did work in poultry clubs and 3,000 undertook bread demonstrations.

One girl in boll weevil territory with the help of her father and brother put up more than 3,000 cans of fruits and vegetables. She had 200 cans of figs which the county agent inspected and found to be of excellent quality. She had already sold part of her products to a local merchant. When the county agent visited her, her father said, "The boll weevil may eat up my cotton but it can't get inside these cans and jars so we are sure to have plenty to eat and some ready money."

#### VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

These statistics indicate the vocational value which all this work has for girls in rural homes who have heretofore found it necessary to go into towns and cities to find any remunerative occupation. Equally significant are the many instances of fine individual development among girls and the emphasis which this development places upon the right training for womanhood. Not only is individual initiative aroused, but elements of leadership are developed in country communities where they are most needed. As a means of developing leadership, many states are giving short courses for prize winning club members from the various counties. These girls have proved their efficiency by successful work and already possess qualities of leadership. Upon being given definite instruction in even a few lines of work, they can be inspired to return to their communities and extend to others the same aid. These

girls frequently become the officers of their clubs and the local representatives through whom the county agent works in developing many community enterprises.

During one short course, each prize winner gave the story of her year's work and told how she spent the money earned from her tenth-acre garden. One girl had for two successive years paid her expenses at the county high school out of her earnings; another was helping her brother through college; another purchased a fine cow and still another enabled her father to hold his cotton until spring by making her funds available for certain family expenses. In every instance, the business experience was one which reflected dignity and judgment.

#### LARGER COMMUNITY COÖPERATION

Coöperation for any sort of community development or benefit to the group is difficult to bring about among farming peoples. Club members undertake it more readily than will their parents. One enterprising girl informed her county agent that she had already booked orders for canned products to the value of \$168.00. When asked if she could fill them all, she said, "Oh! no, I expect to have a good many more orders than this when all my letters are answered but there are eight of us in our club and we will do it together."

Instances of neighborly coöperation are not rare. One county agent reported that upon visiting one little girl, named Gladys, she found that she had been ill for two weeks and unable to set out her tomato plants which were fast becoming too large to be transplanted easily. Upon the agent's visit to the next home, she reported the instance and a member of the same club immediately suggested that they get together and do the transplanting. In a short time, six girls met at Gladys's home. The little sick girl was able to be carried out in a chair and sit in the shade to watch the others happy at work transplanting the tomatoes for her. Words failed and tears came instead when she tried to thank her friends for this kindness.

A county agent reported that the home of one of her club members was destroyed by fire. Before she had opportunity to visit this community, the president of the club had called a meeting and its members had arranged to give a "shower" of canned products to the club member to whose family this loss had occurred.

## THE COUNTY DEMONSTRATION AGENT AND HER WORK

It can be readily seen that the centers of influence in demonstration work are the farms and homes where individuals, perhaps a modest little girl or quiet, home-loving woman, make the demonstrations which teach a lesson to an entire community. This lesson carries greater weight and is more convincing than if made by a skilled specialist from a distant institution but it can be accomplished successfully only when there exists an organization whose leaders have won permanent place in the confidence and affection of the people with whom they work. In the organization of home demonstration work in the South, the county agent holds this important place. Directed by the state agent with headquarters at the state college of agriculture, and frequently given technical help by specialists who come from the same institution, the county agent becomes the personal medium through which information is furnished and by whom skillful demonstrations are directed. The efficient county agent must be a leader and an organizer. She must possess fine sympathy and good judgment. Her knowledge of people and conditions in her county must be wide and accurate. To all this there must be added good training in home economics and a constantly increasing knowledge of the lighter branches of agriculture such as horticulture, dairying and poultry raising.

Demonstration work for women has made most rapid progress where preceded by at least a year of work among girls. Definite results are more quickly obtained among young people who have high enthusiasm and who, fortunately, lack experiences which suggest failure and who are without a sense of caution which previous failures suggest to the mature mind when new enterprises or new methods are proposed. Then, too, the mother's gratitude for training given to her daughter paves the way for active acceptance on her part of instruction and help.

## WIDER USE OF LABOR-SAVING DEVICES

Improvement in management of rural homes has not kept pace with that of the farm itself, nor can it be compared to the management of the city home from which has been taken every creative industry. For these reasons, one line of demonstration



which has been eagerly undertaken by hundreds of women is the making and use of labor-saving devices and securing more labor-saving equipment from the outside. The economic needs of women on farms demand greater skill in the constructive activities which are, fortunately, theirs to manage and from which the opportunity for financial income and the satisfactions of creative work of high order rightfully come. Therefore, demonstrations in poultry raising, home dairying, etc., are among the first to be undertaken. Demonstrations involving the preparation of food for the table, and sanitary measures, are also popular.

Since 1915 was the first year in which formal Home Demonstration Work was undertaken among women, statistics are necessarily incomplete and do not show the whole extent of the work. It is interesting, however, to note that 2,181 home-made fireless cookers have come into common use, accompanied in many instances by the purchase of kerosene stoves. There have been reported nearly a thousand demonstrations made in the use of a home-made iceless refrigerator by which the problems of the sanitary handling of milk and improvement in butter making are largely solved. A good beginning has been made in installing home water works systems, making inexpensive shower baths, and in improved sewage disposal. In a number of counties, demonstrations along sanitary lines were begun with campaigns against flies which involved the making of 1,423 fly traps in a short time, followed by other active measures against this pest. The making of a few practical devices has been a great stimulus to a large number of people who have contributed clever ideas and useful models for many kinds of work. County agents rapidly receive demands for advice in arranging kitchens and adding built-in conveniences. To meet these demands, extension specialists in farm mechanics are devoting considerable time to assisting the county agents with specifications and plans.

In any demonstrations undertaken, whether in the making and use of labor-saving devices, in better utilization of farm products for the table, management of sanitary or hygienic problems, etc., it must be recognized that in addition to technical information brought from the outside, there exist in any community many excellent practices and much valuable information which are not in common use. To find such practices and arouse individuals to a

sense of their obligation in extending them to their less fortunate neighbors is often a valuable part of the work of the county agent. As soon as this is undertaken or whenever a few individual women successfully carry out definite demonstrations in their homes, active demand arises for community organization which shall bring together those having a common interest in some line of work and in addition give opportunity for social life and recreation. Organizations thus developed assume permanent place in their communities.

#### COÖPERATIVE MARKETING OF PRODUCTS

A form of organization which has been found very successful is that for the coöperative marketing of products which results from certain demonstrations. Of these some of the most successful have been organized for the purpose of disposing of poultry products. In one county nine egg circles sold 4,370 dozen eggs in a few months. The products were so carefully graded that better prices were secured for them than had been received by individuals before carrying on the work coöperatively.

#### HAPPY AND PROGRESSIVE COUNTRY HOMES

With the initial work that has been accomplished, the fine support and coöperation given by many existing organizations and institutions, with federal, state and county appropriations rapidly being made, and a demand for the organization of counties far exceeding each year's possibilities, it is safe to assume that this phase of extension work is permanently established. It has met the need of the most progressive, as well as the least developed, homes and communities.

The county agent now has an avenue of approach into every activity of the home. With increased opportunity for training, which institutions are giving by adapting their courses for her need, and with the opportunity for permanent service in her county, the work of the county woman agent will continue to be the most potent influence for progressive and happy country homes.